

Observer: Adventure on the Berkeley Campus

By RUSSELL BAKER

BERKELEY, Calif., Nov. 11—Students of the University of California adopted a new tactic the other night in their struggle for salvation. They held a listening post at the Wheeler Auditorium.

The victim was Sir Basil Spayspakker, the distinguished British authority, who had been booked to open his American lecture tour here with a successful boozing by the world's most notoriously fractious student body. The British consulate had provided Sir Basil with a limousine (harder for students to overturn than the usual Detroit rental car) and his press agent had floated the story (unverifiable from here) that Lloyds of London had refused to insure his bowler for the period of his stay in Berkeley.

It was a jocund Sir Basil who loitered in the campus combat ready room to chat with demonstration-hardened recruiting veterans of Dow Chemical and the C.I.A. and to talk with the press.

"What are you the distinguished British authority on?" the reporters asked.

Sir Basil's Plan

"Well, actually, nothing yet," Sir Basil said. "By representing myself to the students as an authority, you see, I shall force them to boo me into silence. Their natural disgust for authority, you see. Then I shall be an authority on the Fascistic impulse in the contemporary American college student. By plagiarizing a bit of history on the Nazi movement, I shall then have material to support a successful lecture tour at \$1,500 per stand."

"Booed at Berkeley," Sir Basil's agent explained, has become to the lecture business what "Banned in Boston" used to be to the book trade.

Sir Basil left the ready room at 7:53 P.M. escorted by two Nobel Prize winners and a department head who had been drafted for the patrol for their skill at infiltrating the campus in the dark.

The scene at Wheeler Auditorium was ghastly. According to those who were there, Sir Basil was brought to the campus field surgical tent at 8:03 P.M. and

given several transfusions of pure brandy.

"Did he try to charge the student picket line?" asked the C.I.A. recruiter.

"There wasn't any picket line," said one of the Nobel Prize men.

"They trapped him in the auditorium and wouldn't let him out!" said the Dow Chemical recruiter.

"Nobody even made a move to conduct a sit-in in the doorways," said the other Nobel Prize man.

"They started booing and he made the mistake of trying to shout them down," suggested a reporter.

"No," said the department

head. "They just sat there and listened to him."

An eerie silence fell upon the tent.

"It was —" the department head began. "Well, it was —"

"It was what, man? Speak up!" cried Sir Basil's agent.

"Well, I don't want to start a panic," said the department head, "but I think it was a listen-in."

Strong men blanched, gulped and manifested other trite symptoms of terror, and somebody, of course, cried incredulously, "A listen-in? Diabolical!"

Fortunately, Sir Basil was coming around. "They just listened," he murmured. "They just sat there. Very politely,

mind you. All quite civilized and respectful, and they listened. I was stunned by the reaction, of course." He fell back on his cot.

"What did you talk about?"

"I hadn't prepared anything to say, you see. Naturally I assumed that I should be booed the moment I stood up and that after working my mouth silently for a few minutes I would be permitted to withdraw and compose something to say for the rest of my lecture tour. But instead, they all sat there, most civilly, waiting for me to say something. Well, what do I have to say? I know a bit about grouse hunting, a few jokes about Harold Wilson. I thought I was so tedious when I started mumbling away that that might start them to booing. No such luck. They let me drone on for nearly fifty minutes without uttering a whimper."

The Next Lecture?

"Where is your next lecture?" asked the reporters.

"There won't be a next lecture," Sir Basil's agent replied. "When it hits the papers that he couldn't even get booed at Berkeley," he told the reporters, "he won't even be able to get \$50 for talking to an Elks luncheon."

"But," suggested Sir Basil, "couldn't I spin a magnificent talk on the theme of how civilized most of contemporary American college youth is today, no matter what people read in the headlines?"

"Not a chance, Spayspakker," said his agent. "Nobody's going to pay good money these days to be robbed of his favorite fears. See you in London, one of these days."

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